



Coach Approach Ministries Podcast

Episode 9: How to be the Best Client

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[Intro Music]

Brian Miller: Welcome to the *Coach Approach Ministries Podcast* where we help people find their way with God by training the best Christian coaches in the world. I'm Brian Miller, strategic director for Coach Approach Ministries, CAM for short, and I want to share with you about how to be a nearly perfect client. How to be a nearly perfect client, and I love that. I love that topic. How to be a nearly perfect client. What coach wouldn't want to have a nearly perfect client, and I love nearly perfect because there are no perfect clients. There's not one. I don't have a perfect client. Sorry clients, but nearly. You can be a better client. You can get more out of coaching if you're prepared to be coach, and so my hope is that this podcast might most often be used by coaches to give to their new clients on how the client can prepare for the coaching session. People do not know what to expect in a coaching session. They just don't have enough of an idea of what coaching is. They probably think it's mentoring. Some sort of download of content that they just have to take some notes on, or how's this going to apply to me, but that's not coaching. Coaching is drawing out the best in people, and they're making connections with their previous experiences, building confidence in them, helping them know that they have more options, and only they are going to know what a lot of the options are.

So what I did was, I sat down, and I wrote out the names of about 15 clients that I coach, and I wrote down these names, and I just simply brainstormed, "What is an excellent thing that that client brings to the coaching relationship?" I will not be naming my clients because that's definitely against confidentiality, and I certainly wouldn't do that, but I am thinking about particular clients who bring excellent things. It's a great way to think about clients anyway, how excellent they are. So I'm looking for that. I'm looking for that, and I broke it into two categories because I came up with 14 mindsets, or task that a client can bring to a coaching relationship, and I divided it into two categories, a basic and advanced. So this is my basic show, so this is every client can get more out of coaching by making these basic preparations. So let's get started. Number one, make coaching a priority. Make coaching a priority. It is really easy to put coaching on the backburner. I think this is why people don't hire a coach right off because it's proactive. It's forward thinking. Most leaders are spending most of their time fighting battles, putting out fires, administrating, maintaining what's been, but coaching's all about the future.

Coaching is thinking about all the resources you have and moving towards your goal, moving towards where you want to be, and I think people put that off. Even after you've hired a coach, I think many

people think, “I just don’t have time this week for a coaching session,” and I’ve said to many people, “If you don’t have time for a coaching session this week, you really need a coaching session,” and that’s just the truth. They have not set their priorities well enough. If having a coaching session this week is not high on your priority list, I can almost guarantee you, you’re not doing things as well as you could be, and maybe you just need to have a coaching session to set your current priorities. I’ve done that. I’ve had a couple clients who said, “I’m just overwhelmed right now,” and I said, “Let’s just take this session and talk about how you can dig out of this hole, and let’s free up your thinking. Once you make a list, and you have number one on the list, then you’re just going to focus on that instead of focusing on all of them.” So make coaching a priority. If it’s twice a month, which is what I would encourage you to start with, set those dates out three months ahead. Have three months of coaching on the calendar, and protect those dates. Protect those dates, and if you absolutely have to move a coaching date, move it later in that day, or earlier in that day. As a coach, if someone says, “I’ve got to move it,” I’ll make arrangements. I’ll make sacrifices to help you get that coaching session scheduled at a place you can have it today or tomorrow, but don’t skip it.

Don’t skip it because, I’ll tell you what, coaching is a mindset. Coaching is not about the one hour whether you need that hour or not. Coaching is about a mindset where you begin to think in a coaching mindset. So I had a client, my first client, I was thinking, “I want this hour to be the best hour,” and he finally told me, “Brian, I feel like I’m being coached every day. I feel like I’m being coached every day,” and that is what happens. Even after I’ve been coached for a while, I’ve personally been being coached for a couple years, and I think, “When am I going to get out of this coaching session?” That’s the wrong way to think. I need to stay in a coaching relationship. I get a lot out of the sessions. Don’t get me wrong. I need to stay in the coaching relationship because I have a coaching mindset, and if I step away from that, I’ll lose my coaching mindset, and just throughout the week, throughout the month, things will not go as well for me. So number one is make coaching a priority. Schedule the dates in stone, and don’t move them.

Number two is bring a specific topic whether big or small. Bring a specific topic whether big or small. Sometimes people like to coach about the huge things. What’s my big picture? What’s my lifetime plan? What’s my one-year plan? What are the things I’ve got to focus on this year? But sometimes you need to focus on what am I going to do for this trip? I need to put together this for this event. I need to think that through. Very small things. I’ve coached people on how am I going to relate to my son, or to my daughter? What can I do to increase that relationship? And that’s important. That’s a topic, and that’s important no matter what because that kind of personal stuff... I’ve coached people on eating and exercise. I’m not an expert in that, but that kind of stuff pulls away from their overall achievement. It limits them. It’s interference. So I send out a coaching form, and I would encourage out everyone who’s being coached... First of all, get your calendar dates. Set them firm, and second, fill out a prep form which I can send you. Just ask me for it. Send it to my email, brian.miller@coachingclarity.org, and I’ll send you a prep form whether you’re being coached by me or not. It asks these questions, since my last call, I have accomplished? So you’re putting yourself back into the coaching mindset. What was I being coached on before? How have I done keeping myself accountable? Am I moving forward?

The second question is, I seem to be struggling with? That’s a great question. You’re not going to make perfect action steps forward. Something you’re struggling with. Maybe it’s something you had been struggling with, and you haven’t overcome it, or you’re struggling with something new because you’ve got in this new areas. That’s going to inform where you might want to be coached over this next period,

and the final question is, I want to use the coach during the call to what? What do I want to talk about today? Now, the first couple coaching sessions, you're not going to know. You might have some basic ideas, and I do hope you have some basic ideas, but the coach can help you, and maybe even a pre-coaching call, before you start coaching in general, a good hour session with your coach, and it's free, that says here's the kind of things I want to coach about. I do send out a life assessment form that we don't always go through, but it gives me a sense of what you might want to talk about, and I do that in my pre-assessment coaching session before we really get started in coaching. So a prep form. A prep form's a great preparation.

Here's the third thing. Expect to be to be stretch. Expect for your coach to... For that session to be powerful. Expect that your coach is going to challenge you in places that you've not challenged yourself. I was talking to Perry Rue, who is a coach with IBM, and also a coach with Coach Approach Ministries, and Perry's just been very kind to me, to give me some advice from time to time, to mentor me, to be available from time to time, and I was asking him about one client that I didn't feel like was... I didn't feel like I was being successful with that client as I would like to be, and my client didn't seem to think there was any problem, so that's interesting perspective. But Perry told me, he said, "Brian, if you're not close to being fired by your client, you're probably not pushing them enough." You don't want to push them so far that they'll fire you, that you're obnoxious, but you want to challenge your client to think beyond where they've ever thought, to challenge their thinking to think deeper, wider, broader, more options, more resources, to really think about who they are and about who God's created them to be, what they could really accomplish if they put all their eggs in the basket, so many things. You really want to challenge your client, and I was thinking of one particular client that I have that always comes to the coaching relationship saying, "I want to be the best that I can be at what I do. It's important to me. It's important to them. It's important to God. It's important to my tribe, and I want to be stretched." So expect to be stretched.

Don't expect to just tell your coach what you've already done. As a coach, I don't want to know what you've already done. It's a weird thing because I want you to challenge your thinking about what you could do next. You already know what you've done, and I don't need to know. So expect to be stretched. Here's number four. Assume there's a better solution. Some people are just so stubborn they think they've got everything figured out, and they don't need a coach because they've got everything figured out. Arrogant's the word I'm wanting to use there, but I don't know if they're arrogant or... The issue is, what are the possibilities that your current plan could be improved? What are the possibilities that your current plan could be improved? Well, they're 100%. The odds that your current plan could be improved are 100%. They could be more clarified. The steps could be better. There could be more options made. The big question that people miss all the time is who could help me on this? Who would be important for this? Am I dreaming big enough? Am I caught in an old paradigm? There's so many things. Set aside, when you come into the coaching room, and there's not really a coaching room, it's almost always on the phone, but when you come into the coaching room, take your assuredness about your current plan and set it aside at the door, and you can pick that back up in one hour. You can pick it back up, and you're no worse for wear. We're not going to erode your confidence. We're only going to build your confidence.

Set aside your stubbornness about your current plan to get from where you are to where you want to go because one, it's either not working, and that's why you hired a coach, or two, it could be more effective, and that's why you hired a coach. You could get there faster. You could get there healthier. So

set that aside, and open yourself up to the idea that there may be a better plan, that there is a better plan, and that I just want to see it, that there are more strengths that me that could be leveraged. Just all over the place. More resources I could bring to bear on this. So assume there's a better solution. Trust your coach with everything. I was thinking about one client in particular who held back for a while, and you understand, and only about personal things, held back about personal things, and you really have to have a high level of trust with someone to share personal things, but you need to have a high level of trust in your coach as soon as possible. So I promise that it's confidential. I'm not judgmental, so you can tell me what's going on with your family. You can tell me what's going on with your marriage. I'm not going to judge you as a loser at any point because everybody has struggles. Everybody has trials. So if you trust your coach with everything... Your coaching session needs to start with a statement of confidentiality. I just want to remind you that everything that's said here, stays here. It's the Las Vegas rule, and we're not here to do counseling with you, but everything counts, and everything works for you or against you, and so we need a complete trust.

When you're on a coaching conversation, I would really encourage you to find a private place. It's interesting, the one client I'm thinking of for this one in particular, closes his door after we start the coaching conversation. He doesn't close it before. He closes it after we start the coaching conversation, and I think as maybe a reminder to him that he trusts me, and he needs to be fully open with me about everything, and so you need that kind of safety. Make sure your coach has that kind of situation that makes you feel comfortable and confident, that what you say isn't going anywhere. So that's number five. Number six is be gut-honest. Gut-honest. I'm thinking of a client who is probably the most passionate client that I have, and he goes everywhere 100 miles an hour, but he brings the coaching session from the gut. I mean it's somewhere down deep. It's not surface area of what could I do here? What could I do there? How could I tweak this? Coaching really is at its prime when it goes to your core, when it's something that's at your gut-level, when it's something that you say at the end of your coaching session, "I'm going to take that action. I know I'm going to take that. I can't not take that action." From one to ten, how committed to this are you? I am a ten. If you coach with gut-honesty, then you may come up with some coach that you think, "Boy, I ought to do those things," but if you're gut-honest, you're going to say, I'm not going to do those things. I haven't done those things in the past. I have no idea what will motivate me to do that over the long term. That's gut-honest. You need to have that gut-honesty. You do not want to end a coaching session with, "Yeah. I know I should be doing that." That's terrible.

There ought to be a way, there ought to be an option, a motivation, so that you can do it with gusto, or that there ought to be somebody who would do it with gusto, and you need to pass it off, so come to the coaching conversation with gut-honesty. That's number six. Here's my final one, number seven. Bring feelings, both good and bad, into coaching. Coaching is not just analytical. It never is. It can't be. I suppose it depends on the client, and some clients are just purely analytical, and that's fine. Some are very linear. Some are very organic and all over the place, and that's okay. So you need to know who your client is, but I was thinking of one particular client who I think was having confidence issues because of feelings. So at one point this client said, "I know this isn't a counseling session," and I said, "No, it's not a counseling session. I'm not a pastor at this point, I'm coaching." I'm like, "I think there's an experience, though, here that you're making connections to that's holding you back," and the client said, "There is, but I know this isn't counseling." I'm like, "Well share that experience so that we can figure out how to make connections, or break connections, or whatever it is." So feelings are so motivational. There's so

many times in a coaching session that I have a client, and before I move into the options-phase of coaching, I always want to know, what is it you want to walk away with in this coaching session. That may come 30 minutes into the coaching. You don't know right off, but once you know what your topic is, and we find it, and then I say, "What do you want to walk away with in this coaching session?" A lot of time, it's about a feeling. I want to feel more confident as I take this action. Notice they don't want to know what their action is, they want to feel more confident, and that is coaching. So coaching can be very, very much about feelings. What is it that's making you not feel confident, and how can we create a feeling of confidence? How can we get some feedback that will create confidence? How can we get you some approval that will create confidence? How can we look at your experience in the past, so that you can know that you can do this to create confidence? I think clarity and confidence are two of the biggest issues. Those are the two things I want my clients to walk away with, clarity and confidence.

So that's my seven basics, and here's my challenge to you: When are you going to hire a coach? Is there something so important you want to accomplish in your life whether it's anywhere from raising your children well to having a great marriage to running a business that's profitable and doing very well to having a church that feels like it is being fruitful, and expanding the kingdom, to being a tribe leader who is trying to create resource for a whole tribe to move forward. What is it that you're doing that's so important that you need a coach. I know you have it. I know it's in there. When are you going to hire a coach? I encourage you to do it. It's the best thing that I've ever done.

You can find out more about what coaching is by going to coachapproachministries.org, and downloading our free eBook, *The Beginners Guide to Christian Coaching: How to Have Powerful Conversations that Really Make a Difference*. See you next week.

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